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TEN CLASSICAL CONFERENCES: A RETROSPECT¹

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The plan of holding a classical conference was first proposed in a paper on "Latin in the High School,"² which was read at the twenty-second meeting of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club in March, 1894. As a result of the discussion following the paper, committees were appointed at the close of the session to arrange for a conference, along the lines suggested, in the spring vacation of 1895. This was the beginning of the system of departmental conferences in Michigan, which has become a characteristic feature of the meetings of the Schoolmasters' Club.

The first conference was held, in accordance with the plan suggested, at Ann Arbor on March 27 and 28, 1895. The aim, as announced in the circular of invitation, was twofold: "first, to give to those doing work in Latin, Greek, and ancient history an opportunity to present the results of research; and, secondly, to offer an opportunity for the discussion of questions of fundamental importance to the interests of classical scholarship, particularly in the central and western states." The meetings were held in Newberry Hall, and there were three sessions each day, the evening sessions being devoted to the discussion of subjects of general interest. The attendance was much larger than had been anticipated, and gave the proceedings almost a national character. College and university men, normal-school and high-school teachers, were present, not only from Michigan, but from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Iowa.

To the proceedings of this first conference an entire number of the *School Review*, for June, 1895, was devoted. There were twenty-two papers presented, besides an address by Professor Paul Shorey, of the University of Chicago, on "The Classics in Modern Education,"

¹ Read before the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor, Mich., March 31, 1905.

² Published in the *Educational Review*, Vol. VIII, pp. 25-42.

which all who heard it must remember as a brilliant effort; three briefer addresses on the subject, "Shall We Have a Six Years' High School Latin Course?"¹ by Professor West, of Princeton, Professor Hale, of the University of Chicago, and Superintendent A. F. Nightingale, of Chicago; a report of a committee, appointed the previous year, on "Illustrative Material for Classical Teaching," which was published in the "Proceedings" and is still referred to, though in some particulars already out of date; and a report of a similar committee on the High-School Classical Library. The Committee on Classical Library published a selected list of books recommended in a small pamphlet, the edition of which was soon exhausted; a revised edition was prepared by Dr. Clarence L. Meader, and published by the Macmillan Co., New York, in 1897. This new edition also has been extensively circulated. At one of the evening sessions Mr. Gardner S. Lamson, of the University School of Music, rendered for the first time in Michigan, if not in the West, the hymn to Apollo which had been discovered two years before in the French excavations at Delphi.

When the conference of 1895 was arranged, it was not expected that there would be a similar gathering in the immediate future. Nevertheless, there was manifested a desire on the part of several teachers that something of the kind should be planned for the next year, and a short program was prepared for a single session appointed in connection with the spring meeting of the Schoolmasters' Club, in 1896. The place designated was the Latin Room of the university; at the hour appointed, the seventy seats in that room were found to be inadequate to accommodate those who had come, and a hurried adjournment was made to a larger room.

In the light of this experience, it was deemed advisable to arrange a conference for the spring of 1897. Two sessions were held, and were well attended; the proceedings were published in the *School Review*.²

The conference of 1898 was the most important of the first decade. It was held under the auspices of the "Committee of Twelve" which had been appointed at the last previous meeting of the American

¹ Published in the *School Review*, Vol. III, pp. 321-53.

² Vol. V, pp. 605-24.

Philological Association to report on certain matters connected with the study of Greek and Latin in secondary schools. In the same week as the conference, this Committee of Twelve and auxiliary committees for Greek and Latin held long and fruitful sessions, from which resulted the *Report of the Committee of Twelve on Courses in Greek and Latin in Secondary Schools*; this was published by Ginn & Co. in 1899, and is now familiar to all.

The "Proceedings" of this conference, with a selection of papers, filled the issue of the *School Review* for the following June. The program comprised introductory addresses by Professor Thomas D. Seymour, chairman of the Committee of Twelve; President Charles Kendall Adams, of the University of Wisconsin; and Acting President Hutchins, of the University of Michigan; addresses upon the work of the Archæological Institute of America, by its president, Professor John Williams White, and upon the American schools in Athens and Rome, by Professor Seymour and Professor Hale, chairmen of the two managing committees in charge of these institutions; an address by Professor Andrew F. West, on "The True Spirit of Classical Culture,"¹ noteworthy by reason of its keen analysis of our present conditions; and a discussion of Greek music,² by Dr. Charles William Seidenadel, of the University of Chicago, after which members of the faculty of the University School of Music rendered the extant fragments of ancient Greek melodies. In addition to these addresses, there were twenty-six papers, dealing with a great variety of subjects in classical linguistics, literature, and archæology.

At the conference of 1895 the East and the middle West had been well represented; at the conference of 1898 representatives were present also from the more remote states of the West and South, as Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, North Carolina, Mississippi, and California. Of special interest was the exhibition of the priceless early editions of Virgil in the Morgan collection, which had lately been presented to the library of Princeton University, and which the authorities of Princeton were generous enough to allow Professor West to bring with him to Ann Arbor.

¹ Published in the *School Review*, Vol. VI, pp. 630-42.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 541-46.

Each year, since 1898, a Classical Conference has been held; there have been full programs, and abundant interest has been manifested by a large attendance. Two of the conferences, those of 1899 and 1904, were taken to the Michigan State Normal College at Ypsilanti, with the general sessions of the Schoolmasters' Club. Time does not suffice to speak of the different sessions in detail; and, besides, the "Proceedings" are accessible in published form in the files of the *School Review*.¹ We must limit our survey to more general aspects.

Not counting the addresses on subjects of broader interest, nor the more or less formal discussions of papers, we find that at the ten conferences, from 1895 to 1904, there were presented 140 papers. These naturally fall into two classes: pedagogical papers, concerned with educational matters, such as courses of study and methods of work; and scientific papers, dealing with matters of scholarship, in the domain of linguistics, the ancient literatures, archæology, and antiquities. It is interesting to note that of the 140 papers, no less than 104, or approximately three-fourths, belonged to the latter class, only 36 being properly reckoned as pedagogical. The papers, addresses, and discussions of the ten conferences, reckoned together, number 181.

Valuable as have been the contributions to what we may call classical pedagogy through the papers and discussions of the conferences, the programs have clearly emphasized the side of scholarship.² To judge from a hasty inspection of the list of papers, not counting the published abstracts, nearly one-half have been published, or are now in process of publication, in full. A number have appeared in the *School Review*; others, in the *American Journal of Philology*, the *American Journal of Archæology*, and other technical periodicals.

The number of papers dealing with matters of scholarship which have been contributed by teachers in high schools is worthy of note;

¹ Vol. VII, pp. 321-30; Vol. VIII, pp. 313-34, 457-65; Vol. X, pp. 146-56, 374-409, 417-32, 456-73; Vol. XI, pp. 384-417; Vol. XII, pp. 365-419.

² See the paper "Should Papers Dealing with Matters of Scholarship, or Papers on Method, be the Chief Feature of Teachers Meetings?" in the *School Review*, Vol. IV, pp. 594-603.

and I have been interested in learning that, in not a few instances, valuable papers offered by teachers who are known to be excessively busy during the year have been worked up in summer sessions, at the universities. I am informed that four papers of the present program embody the results of work in university summer school. I have always been opposed to summer-school work of any kind; yet, if vacation sessions of our universities can be made recruiting stations, so to speak, for classical teachers who are cut off during the year from the possibility of making advances in scholarship by routine duties or the lack of library facilities, and who eagerly embrace the opportunities thus afforded to strengthen the foundations of their knowledge or engage in research under competent direction, much may be said in their favor. Certainly nothing is more painful to witness, or more a menace to the future of humanistic studies, than the gradual woodenizing of so many classical teachers who, inadequately prepared for their work and cut off from sources of inspiration, ultimately succumb to adverse influences and become the lumber of the profession.

Did time permit, I should be tempted to try to point out what seem to me to have been, during the decade which has just closed, the ruling tendencies in our secondary and collegiate education, so far as the position of Greek and Latin has been affected. Such a discussion, however, would far transcend the limits of a brief retrospect; I can only remark in passing that, while the shifting of educational positions during the past decade has caused an unsettling in the classical field, accompanied by a marked decline in the enrolment of Greek students in school and college, there seem to me to be signs already of a reaction in favor of classical studies, particularly Greek. The Central High School and Eastern High School of Detroit, for example, report the largest beginning Greek classes in the history of those institutions; and too much stress cannot be laid upon the fact that where high-school Latin teachers do their duty in emphasizing the just claims of Greek, enough pupils will present themselves as applicants for this study to make it expedient for any board of education to provide for their instruction.

In closing I desire to say that if the Classical Conferences have been found helpful, not merely to those who have attended them,

but also to the much larger circle of those who have been brought into contact with their work through the medium of publication; if they have been serviceable in promoting the interests of sound learning and sane teaching, the credit is due to the men and women who have consented, often with serious sacrifice of time and at no inconsiderable expense, to take places upon the programs, and who have thus generously given to us all the benefit and enjoyment of the results of their best thought and work. To all these we are under deep and lasting obligation.

Do the conferences in truth respond to a manifest educational need? If so, we may expect that similar gatherings, in which classical teachers and professors in all classes of institutions may freely meet on common ground, will be multiplied. It is a pleasure to note the movement for the formation of a Classical Association of the middle West, which will have its first meeting in Chicago in May, and for the organization of a Southeastern Classical Conference, centering at Washington, D. C.; upon these new undertakings, as well as upon the second decade of our Michigan conferences, may friends of the classics West and East enter *cum bonis ominibus votisque!*